Education philosophy is divided into four schools of thought: Idealism, Realism, Pragmatism, and Existentialism. Each of the philosophies is related to major philosophical movements and is characterized by different focuses of philosophy. These philosophies extend into the classroom in various ways.

Idealism is tied to the philosophies of Plato, Socrates, Immanuel Kant, and Jane Roland Martin. Idealism focuses on the belief of absolute truths that remain throughout time. As idea-centered education it centers on reasoning through lecture, discussion, and imitation.

Realism is a reaction movement to Idealism that is grounded in the teachings of Aristotle, Locke, and Alfred North Whitehead. Realism stresses the reality of existence beyond human ideas. It searches for natural truths. Realistic education is grounded in universal laws and focuses on mastering information through critical thinking and the scientific process.

Pragmatism stresses the only constant of existence is change. Charles Sanders Pierce, John Dewey, and Richard Rorty are the major educational pragmatists. Project-based and interdisciplinary, pragmatism is a socially driven and changing educational philosophy.

The final is existentialism which is connected to Jean-Paul Satre, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Maxine Green. Existentialism is focused on the individual’s ability to explore personal meaning free of any societal pressures.

As a future educator, my alignment within the philosophies is nebulous except in regards to one distinct line. I am not a realist. Realism is important. I do not reject it’s importance in its place; however, I draw more of my personal classroom philosophy from the other three.

The paradox of existing within the boundaries of the separated schools of educational philosophy is hard to clarify as they disagree with each other. My meshing of styles is the product of personal philosophy, content knowledge, and values. As an idealist I do believe in absolute truths and ideas that exist within society. As members and participants, we can all explore understanding and ideas and appreciate something.

The limitations of universalism in Idealism are balanced within my pragmatic and existential leanings. As an individual, I am a pragmatist. My life is in constant motion and change. I am socially driven. I believe in interdisciplinary approaches to address inquiries and solve problems. That being said though, I also believe in the importance of personal freedom and individual exploration are necessary for the implementation of exploring existing truths and ideas and participating in the social fabric of society.

As identity is constructed through exploration and inquiry of individual and societal truths, ideas, and problem solving, I hybridize my educational philosophy of the best of Idealism, Pragmatism, and Existentialism. As an future English teacher, I believe that idealism and existentialism philosophically meet what I want to accomplish from understanding literature first, eventually, playing into developing pragmatic discoveries as well.